UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ PROGRAM

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Ilex latifolia: Lusterleaf Holly[1]

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Introduction

This broad-leaved, evergreen tree can reach 40 feet in height with a 20 to 25-foot spread but is usually seen at half that size. The six-inch-long, glossy dark green, leathery leaves have serrate margins and are unusually coarse-textured and large for a Holly. The 0.25-inch-thick, newly emerging green shoots add to the coarseness of this attractive tree. New shoots droop under the weight of the emerging leaves creating a full-crowned, round or slightly pyramidal canopy. The inconspicuous, yellowish-white spring flowers are followed by a profusion of small, brick red berries (on female plants), appearing in dense clusters, and persisting on the plants throughout the winter. Both male and female plants must be planted to ensure production of the berries.



Figure 1. Young *Ilex latifolia*: Lusterleaf Holly
Credit: Ed Gilman

General Information

Scientific name: *Ilex latifolia*

Pronunciation: EYE-lecks lat-ih-FOLE-ee-uh

Common name(s): Lusterleaf Holly

Family: *Aquifoliaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7A through 9B (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; deck or patio; screen; specimen; espalier; hedge; street without sidewalk; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median; container or planter

Availability: not native to North America

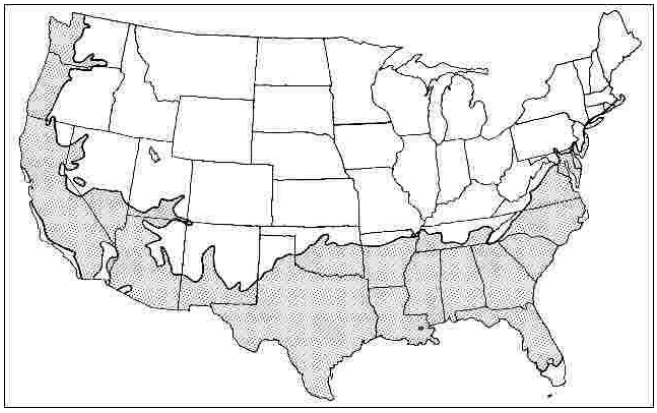

Figure 2. Range

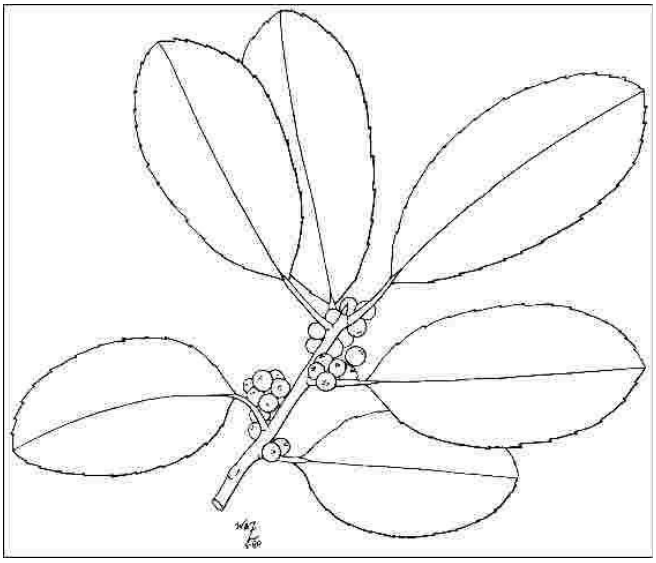

Figure 3. Foliage

Description

Height: 20 to 25 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: pyramidal, round

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate, spiny

Leaf shape: oblong, elliptic (oval)

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, broadleaf evergreen

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green

Current year twig thickness: thick, very thick

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: partial sun or partial shade, shade tolerant

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

Lusterleaf Holly can be clipped or can grow on its own into a dense screen when located in bright light, but has a more open crown in shade. This makes a nice background plant in a shrub border in a large landscape due to the dark green foliage. Other plants contrast well when planted in front of it. Nurseries can train the plant into a multistemmed specimen or prune it to develop a single trunk for patio or street tree use.

Lusterleaf Holly looks its best if planted in an area receiving less than all-day sun and strong winds. Some shading in the afternoon would be fine. Not for exposed, windy, dry, full-sun areas, this Holly does well in shaded locations. Fertile, well-drained but moisture-retentive soils are best for this handsome evergreen. Plants will require only occasional pruning to maintain form and size and they can be espaliered on a wall or fence quite easily. The bold foliage of Lusterleaf Holly contrasts well with other plants and it is also a striking specimen planting on its own. Clear the inner portions of the branches of foliage and small twigs and light the tree at night from below to create a nice night-time specimen.

The cultivar `Wirt L. Winn' is known for its excellent form and foliage color.

Propagation is difficult. Hardwood cuttings taken in fall and winter sometimes root. Seeds can take several years to germinate. Plants are sometimes grafted onto *Ilex opaca* seedlings.

Pests and Diseases

There is a caterpillar which occasionally chews holes in the leafs.

[1] This document is ENH462, one of a series of the UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture Department. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu for the currently supported version of this publication.
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